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Manifesto

of

Sir Robert Borden

to the

Canadian People

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OF
SIR ROBERT BORDEN
TO THE
CANADIAN PEOPLE

November 17, 1917.

To the people of Canada:

The twelfth Parliament has been dissolved, and it becomes the duty of the people to choose a new House of Commons. Under the constitution the mandate of those whom the constituency returned in 1911 expired a year ago. But by agreement between the two parties in both the Commons and the Senate, and with the clear sanction of public opinion, the duration of Parliament was for causes strange and momentous in our history extended for one year.

A further extension was proposed, but owing to the attitude of the Opposition it could not be pressed, and a general election thus became inevitable.

CONTEST WITHOUT PARALLEL.

The circumstances and conditions under which and upon which the people must pronounce judgment are without precedent or parallel. Nearly three and a half years ago, in obedience to honorable alliances and out of regard for her very existence and the security of her dominions, Great Britain engaged in war with Germany. Canada, as became a partner nation in the British Commonwealth, entered the struggle by the decree of her Parliament. THAT DECREE WAS ENACTED WITHOUT A SINGLE DISSENTING VOICE, AND IT GAVE TRUE EXPRESSION TO THE SENTIMENT AND DETERMINATION OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY. No Government could have lived and no Government would have deserved to live that did not give such instant effect to the popular will. HESITATION WOULD HAVE SAVORED OF COWARDICE. DELAY WOULD HAVE HUMBLED AND DEFAMED THE NATION. Failure to mobilize the manhood and resources of the Dominion for freedom and civilization would have exposed us to the scorn of our own time and the contempt of posterity.

NATION DID NOT HESITATE.

But neither the Government nor the people hesitated. The resolution and patriotism of the Canadian people found prompt and adequate

expression. By voluntary enlistment an army of over four hundred thousand has been enrolled.

> Three hundred and fifty thousand Canadian soldiers have gone overseas to service and sacrifice on the scarred fields of France and Flanders. Many thousands of them lie in graves hallowed by their blood and glorified by their suffering. Pride in their valor and their achievements mitigates the sorrow which possesses so many of our homes. Through what they have done we have a new revelation of patriotism. The nation is clothed with new dignity. But how meanly we shall stand at the bar of history if, through any neglect or failure of ours, the cause for which they fell does not prevail.

By the test which they met so steadily and bravely we shall be judged. IF THEIR LIVING COMRADES IN THE TRENCHES ARE NOT SUPPORTED, SHAME AND HUMILIATION WILL BE OUR PORTION. THEY WILL HAVE PAID A PRICE FOR US BEYOND OUR DESERTS. WHAT THEY SOWED IN HONOR WE SHALL REAP IN DISHONOR.

COMPULSION REQUIRED.

When it became apparent that the voluntary system was not providing adequate reinforcements for the army, it became necessary to consider the provisions of the Militia Act, empowering the Government to enforce compulsory military service upon the male citizens of Canada between the ages of eighteen and sixty, inclusive. The selection under that law is to be made by ballot, that is, by chance. UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS THE PUBLIC INTEREST CANNOT BE SERVED BY A CHANCE SELECTION, BUT IT DEMANDS INSTEAD AN INTELLIGENT SELECTION, BASED UPON A WISE AND CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE COUNTRY'S NEEDS, BOTH IN THE FIGHTING LINE AND AT HOME. Accordingly a new measure to authorize a selective draft of persons between the ages of twenty and forty-five was prepared and submitted to Parliament. MUCH CARE WAS TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT THE MEASURE WOULD NOT BE UNFAIR OR UNJUST IN ITS PROVISIONS, THAT THERE WOULD BE NO PREJUDICIAL INTERFERENCE WITH AGRICULTURE OR INDUSTRY, THAT THERE WOULD BE NO PREFERENCES FOR GROUPS, CLASSES, SECTIONS OR INTERESTS.

A DEMOCRATIC MEASURE.

The Military Service Act is a democratic measure, calling the rich as well as the poor—indeed, bearing more heavily upon the rich, in that it is more difficult for a young man of means to claim exemption on the ground that his labor is needed at home for the support of his relatives. It is eminently fair as between the Provinces, and as between those portions of our people who are of different racial origins, because IT PAYS NO ATTENTION WHATSOEVER TO PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES OR RACIAL GROUPINGS, BUT CALLS UP ALL YOUNG

CANADIANS OF THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES, WHEREVER THEY MAY LIVE. It is the most effective method possible, for IT IMPARTIALLY SELECTS THE MEN WHO CAN GO ABROAD AND FIGHT, AND THE MEN WHO SHOULD STAY AT HOME AND WORK, with an eye single to the fitness for these two closely-related services, and so insures that each man is precisely where his blow or his labor tells best. In enforcing this act the Government will proceed upon the principle that the service and sacrifice of any family which has already sent men to the front must be taken into account in considering the exemption of other members of the same family.

COMPULSION BECAME IMPERATIVE.

THERE WAS NO THOUGHT OF COMPULSION UNTIL COMPULSION BECAME IMPERATIVE. There was no hesitation to seek authority for enrolment by selection when the necessity for greater reinforcements was indubitably established. IT WAS THE ENEMY—NOT THE GOVERNMENT—WHICH ISSUED THE CALL TO ARMS AND COMPELLED A MOBILIZATION OF ALL THE RESOURCES OF THE EMPIRE.

The Government appeals to the people with confidence that THE VIGOROUS PROSECUTION OF THE WAR IS THEIR IMMEDIATE AND SUPREME CONCERN, and that the Military Service Act which authorized the selective draft is but a reflection of the temper and will of the nation.

BACKED BY GOVERNMENT.

The Administration in whose name this appeal is made is not the agent or organ of any group, section or party. There are those among its members who must assume responsibility for the conduct of the war thus far; and such members do not seek to evade that responsibility. There are those also among its members who have no such responsibility. For the Military Service Act all assume the fullest responsibility, as do all for the future conduct of the war and for future measures of policy and acts of administration. It is not suggested that the Government which held out for six years is immune from criticism because of the Union Government which has been organized, but only that THE WAR IS THE FIRST CONSIDERATION, AND THAT TO ITS ENERGETIC AND SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION UNION AMONG THE PEOPLE IS AS NECESSARY AS THE COALITION OF POLITICAL LEADERS.

HAD TO SEEK UNITY.

No claim of exceptional patriotism or public virtue is made for those who have united to constitute a coalition Cabinet. But it was necessary to sink differences and overcome prejudices if that object was to be attained.

IF THE OBJECT WAS GREAT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY UNION AND CO-OPERATION OF POLITI-

CAL LEADERS DIVIDED BY OLD QUARRELS AND ACUTE DIFFERENCES IN FEELING AND OPINION, IT IS SURELY GREAT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY THE LIKE UNITY OF PURPOSE AND ENDEAVOR AMONG THE ELECTORS UPON WHOSE DECISION THE FATE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOR THE FURTHER PROSECUTION OF THE WAR DEPEND.

In the trenches Liberals and Conservatives fight and die for a common Canada and a common Empire. No party wall divides the wounded in the hospitals. Nor do those who minister to their wounds and ease their sufferings ask to what party the afflicted belong. Is it too much to expect that the spirit by which the army lives and triumphs will be as active and as powerful among the people at home when they cast their ballots, and that here as there the great cause for which we contend will unify and inspire the nation?

REFORMS BY NEW GOVERNMENT.

But there are other reasons why the Union Government should be entrusted with power. It has pledged itself to the extirpation of old abuses and to a wise and bold policy of constructive reform. The system of patronage in the distribution of contracts and offices, which has prevailed in Canada for generations, has been the root of many political evils. It has fostered local and sectional interests incompatible with the national welfare and injurious to the efficiency of the national service. It has troubled representatives of the people, permitted the ascendancy of organized minorities in the constituencies, and affected the independence of Parliament itself.

It may be that these evils should have been overcome long ago. Censure may lie upon successive Governments which have tolerated the system. But inveterate diseases succumb only to heroic treatment—and heroism has not distinguished Canadian parties in dealing with patronage. Generally, Governments have lived long in Canada, and when for many years distribution of patronage has been confined to the party in power there is a natural disposition to adjust the balance when at length the other party succeeds to office. Once committed to the system, influences are recognized and interests created that are not easily resisted or dislodged. It is believed that a Government derived from both political parties and strengthened by special representation of agriculture and organized labor can act with greater freedom and independence than a Government which held office under the old conditions. Hence the resolution to abolish trading in patronage, to fill public office by merit and not by favoritism, and to establish honest and open competition in awarding contracts and buying supplies.

GOVERNMENT'S PLEDGES.

It is not necessary to repeat in full the announcement of policy already made public. In carrying out these policies the Government engages to stop wasteful expenditure and unwise duplication of railways,

and to arrange effective co-operation between the public and private railway systems. With the acquisition of the Canadian Northern Railway, the State becomes one of the chief carriers of passengers and products. If public management is to be satisfactory, there must be vigor in administration and breadth and courage in outlook. Efficiency must be insured. Consideration of personal or political patronage must be sternly ignored. Accommodation equal to that which the private companies afford must be provided.

TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS.

Measures must also be taken to insure adequate ocean transportation under national or international regulation if extortionate charges are attempted. For many years in Canada the railway policy was determined not so much by the needs of transportation as by the demands of rival groups of railway builders. As a result we have a great railway mileage, constructed at heavy cost, with long stretches of parallel lines where a single system could have handled all the traffic, and at lower charges upon a smaller investment of capital. It is believed, however, that Canada will yet develop traffic in excess of present rail facilities, and in the meantime the Government will endeavor to co-ordinate existing services and improve and protect the national railways without injustice to private companies.

TAX WEALTH MORE HEAVILY.

As old methods of railway building have to be abandoned, so old systems of taxation have to be revised. In order to meet the ever-increasing expenditure for war purposes and also to insure that all shall share in common service and sacrifice, WEALTH WILL BE CONSCRIPTED BY ADEQUATE TAXATION OF WAR PROFITS AND INCREASED TAXATION OF INCOME. There will be close inquiry into expenditures in order to protect the Treasury against purely local demands, and to eliminate undertakings of purely political origin and object. Permanent committees of the Cabinet have been established for war and reconstruction.

SOLVING WAR PROBLEMS.

The very difficult and intricate problems inevitably arising out of war conditions are being considered and studied earnestly and attentively with a view to effective action with the least possible delay. Immigration and colonization will receive careful and continuous attention, always with a sympathetic regard for labor and in full recognition of the necessity for greater production. Thorough and effective co-operation among agricultural producers will be encouraged.

THE MEN BY WHOSE SACRIFICE AND ENDURANCE THE FREE INSTITUTIONS OF CANADA WILL BE PRESERVED MUST BE RE-EDUCATED WHERE NECESSARY AND RE-ESTABLISHED ON THE LAND OR IN SUCH OTHER PURSUITS OR VOCATIONS AS THEY MAY DESIRE TO FOLLOW.

THE MAIMED AND THE BROKEN WILL BE PROTECTED; THE WIDOW AND THE ORPHAN WILL BE HELPED AND CHERISHED.

FRANCHISE FOR WOMEN.

Duty and decency demand that those who are saving democracy shall not find democracy a house of privilege, or a school of poverty and hardship. THE FRANCHISE WILL BE EXTENDED TO WOMEN, NOT CHIEFLY IN RECOGNITION OF DEVOTED AND CAPABLE SERVICE IN THE WAR, BUT AS A MEASURE OF JUSTICE TOO LONG DELAYED. If men die, women suffer; if they are wounded, women heal; if they are maimed, women labor. And since there can be no separation in suffering and sacrifice, there should be none in citizenship.

A COMMON PATRIOTISM.

The Government will strive to develop and stimulate a common patriotism in all elements of the people and all portions of the Dominion. It inherits no baneful legacies. It cherishes no grievances or animosities. East and West are equal at the Council table, and in the new Parliament all the Provinces will have equal and adequate representation. In the electoral campaign it is greatly to be desired that reticence should be observed in the treatment of all questions in which smoulder the fires of old racial and religious quarrels and contentions. THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR US ON THE FAR-AWAY FIELDS OF BATTLE CHERISHED THE VISION OF A UNITED CANADA. TO DENY THE VISION WOULD BE TREASON TO THEIR MEMORY.

The Government thoroughly realizes that in this national emergency there is imperative necessity for fulfillment of its policies with the least possible delay. IT PLEDGES ITSELF TO PROSECUTE THE WAR WITH CEASELESS VIGOR, TO STRIVE FOR NATIONAL UNITY, TO ADMINISTER THE PUBLIC DEPARTMENTS WITH ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY, TO DEVISE MEASURES OF TAXATION WHICH WILL REGARD SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND TO NEGLECT NOTHING THAT MAY BE REQUIRED TO SUSTAIN THE SOLDIERS ON SERVICE OR TO COMFORT THOSE OF THEIR HOUSEHOLDS WHOM THEY HAVE LEFT BEHIND.

FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT THESE OBJECTS CAN BEST BE ACHIEVED BY A GOVERNMENT REPRESENTING ALL PARTIES, CLASSES, CREEDS AND INTERESTS, I APPEAL WITH CONFIDENCE ON ITS BEHALF FOR THE SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT OF THE CANADIAN PEOPLE.

R. L. Borden.